

TREASURE OF THE SAN ANDREAS

by Ted Smith

Part 3.

Concluding the story of the mystery surrounding the discovery of an estimated 20 billion pounds sterling in gold, in the underground caverns of New Mexico.

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The possession of immense wealth put them at an obvious disadvantage, as it made them extremely vulnerable, forced, as they were, to remain rooted in the same place to protect it. The lesson to be learned from these very anxious weeks of dreadful uncertainty would never be forgotten by Pizarro. It was all very well going after a fabulous treasure, but what to do with it once it was secured? Atahualpa vehemently denied being involved in a secretly planned insurrection. But Pizarro was far from convinced of his innocence. Prince Huascar had mysteriously drowned in the Andamarca River, and Atahualpa, who had received the news of his death with suitable expressions of surprise and indignation, must surely have had a hand in it.

Pizarro had sent messages to San Miguel, giving the account of his capture of Atahualpa, and of the fantastic ransom offered for his release. He urged the Spaniards to send Almagro over the mountains to him as soon as he arrived from Panama. Only when Almagro showed up with reinforcements would he feel secure. To prove his good faith, Atahualpa suggested to Pizarro that he send some of his own men to Cuzco, they could then see for themselves that everything was being done to collect the gold, and that the country was not preparing for war. Pizarro gladly accepted the offer, and spared three cavalymen to go and reconnoitre to the south. After several weeks' absence, the three cavalymen returned from Cuzco. They had travelled six hundred miles to the capital without any hindrance through country entirely at peace. Nowhere did they encounter signs of trouble. Pizarro was greatly relieved to hear this. He was also greatly pleased with what they brought back with them: in addition to much silver, two hundred loads of pure gold!

Almagro had at last arrived! He had safely reached San Miguel with reinforcements of 150 infantry and 50 cavalry. Pizarro received these glad tidings in a letter from Almagro's secretary, Perez, with a private note enclosed, informing him that his master planned to oust him from his position of leader. Pizarro wasted no time in replying to Almagro, very briefly touching on his secretary's disloyalty, and expressing full confidence in the one friend he could trust, with every hope that they should continue to share in the richness of the conquest. He ended with an urgent request that he make all haste to Cajamarca, where a wonderful welcome awaited him. Almagro, being a sincere and open-minded man, accepted the contents of the letter for what they were worth, and set off early the next morning but not before he had dealt with secretary Perez whom he promptly hanged on the spot.

The three Spanish cavalymen who had returned from the south had been ecstatic about the incredibly vast amount of treasure at Cuzco. The room full of gold that Atahualpa had promised was nothing compared with what they had seen at the capital. The great temple was absolutely ablaze with gold, silver and precious gems. This information especially influenced Pizarro in deciding to wind up proceedings at Cajamarca, even though the amount for the agreed ransom had not yet been quite reached. He was impatient to move on Cuzco. Once he had taken the capital he would be master of the empire. He was therefore overjoyed when Almagro finally arrived with reinforcements, because he could recommence active operations. But there remained the prickly problem of what to do about Atahualpa? "Kill the dog," growled Almagro.

The accumulation of ransom gold was melted into ingots, and was estimated to be worth 1,326,539 *pesos de oro*. In addition, the silver was reckoned to be worth 51,610 marks. The share Pizarro allocated to himself amounted to 57,222 *pesos de oro*, and 2,350 marks of silver. He also acquired the massive solid gold throne of the Inca, which was estimated to be worth 25,000 *pesos de oro*.

The troublemakers whom Pizarro had left at San Miguel, who had shown up at Cajamarca with Almagro, were most vociferous in their demands that the Inca now be put to death. They had no claim on the enormous ransom and, indeed, received very little from it. The followers of Almagro, who also had no claim on the ransom, joined the chorus demanding that Atahualpa be killed. They wanted him out of the way, so the mission might proceed, and allow them to make their own fortunes.

Since Atahualpa had fulfilled his side of the bargain, the Spanish honour now required that he be set free, but that would then put him, a strong and very capable king, in a position to destroy the invaders. That would not be allowed. Accordingly, the Spaniards arranged to put the Inca on trial for murdering his brother, Huascar, and for inciting his own people to rebellion.

The trial was a complete farce, a travesty of justice, with Pizarro and Almagro, two of the biggest cut throats of the 16th century acting as judges. The emperor was, of course, pronounced guilty, and was sentenced to be burned to death in the plaza. Atahualpa vehemently protested his innocence to no avail.

On that same day, 29 August 1533, just two hours after sunset, a trumpet sounded in the great square of Cajamarca, where the entire military garrison was drawn up to witness the forthcoming proceedings. Atahualpa was led in chains out of the fortress. With some difficulty, he shuffled forward to the stake, with the Dominican friar, Vincente de Valverde, at his side, beseeching him to renounce his god, and embrace the true faith.

"My son," cried Valverde, holding up a crucifix, "abjure your false god, and be baptised. Even now, it is not too late to save yourself from the fires of hell, where you will burn for all eternity!" He leaned closer to Atahualpa, and hissed in his ear.

"Do it, you fool, and I promise you shall not die by fire."

"How then shall I die?" asked Atahualpa.

"By the garrotte," replied Valverde.

Atahualpa called to Pizarro, and asked if this was true, and

when told that it was, he consented to be baptised. Valverde performed the rite, the most important of Holy Church, and blessed the Inca in the name of Juan de Atahualpa. He then stepped back to allow his new convert to be taken away, to be executed by slow strangulation.

With the death of Atahualpa, the Inca empire effectively ceased to exist, and the Spanish conquest of Peru was brought to a successful conclusion. But not before the Spaniards, who descended upon the country like locusts, had marched south on the capital and stripped it bare of everything of value. The work of centuries was utterly destroyed by the organised brigandage. Temples and palaces were looted of their treasures. Homes were pillaged or demolished. Vast amounts of gold, silver, and precious jewels were seized. There were gem-encrusted ornaments, gold vases, vessels and utensils. Of pure gold there were four life sized Lamas, and ten or twelve statues of women cast in gold or silver. In the home of one Inca noble, ten planks of solid silver were found, each plank being twenty feet long by a foot in width and three inches thick. Bands of gold-mad Spaniards roamed the streets of Cuzco in search of hidden treasures. Inca nobles and their families were subjected to the most vile and excruciating tortures to make them reveal the hiding places of real or imagined hoards of gold. Death, torture and mutilation was the order of the day. Indian men, women and children caught wearing jewellery had their hands and fingers hacked off by the gold-crazy Spaniards who could not wait to be given the valuables. The whole amount of loot was piled high in a common heap, gathered together for division, after some of the best articles had been put aside for the Crown. The vast hoard of treasure is said to have exceeded the ransom accumulated for Atahualpa.

On 26 April 1538, almost five years after the tragic death of Atahualpa, the followers of Pizarro clashed in battle with Almagro and his men at La Salinas, near Cuzco. Almagro was defeated and was summarily executed by Hernando Pizarro. Three years later, on Sunday, 26 June 1541, Francisco Pizarro was attacked and killed in his palace at Lima. The perpetrators were a group of Spanish cavaliers seeking revenge for the death of Almagro.

It was noon, the hour when Pizarro had dinner. The cavaliers came along the street, shouting, "Long live the king! Death to the tyrant!" Their leader, a man called Rada, was at their head as they ran through the open, unguarded palace gates and attacked two domestics loitering in the courtyard. One of these received a blow and fell to the ground; the other sped away towards the house, calling, "Help help! They're here to murder the marquess!" The commotion aroused Pizarro and his party of guests. Rising from the table, where they were all seated, Pizarro called to one of his officers to secure the outer chamber, while he hurried away to arm himself. The clamour outside grew louder, and his guests, who were a dozen of the leading citizens of Lima, including the judge Velasquez, became very alarmed, and retreated in haste to a balcony, where they jumped over a railing to the garden below and ran off, leaving their host to fend for himself. The officer, who should have secured the outer chamber, held the door ajar, and tried to enter into discussion with the assailants. But they burst in, killed him on the spot, and threw his lifeless body down into the area below. Pizarro's brother-in-law, Martinez de Alcantara, who

was assisting the marquess to put on his armour, ran to the outer chamber and, with the aid of two young men who were pages, tried to resist the attack.

In the desperate struggle that followed, two of the assassins were mortally wounded, and Alcantara and his two helpers were badly hurt. Pizarro, giving up futile attempts to don his breastplate, wrapped a cloak around his arm, grabbed a sword, and rushed to the outer chamber to join the affray. By now, the two pages lay dead on the floor, and Alcantara was staggering backwards under a rain of blows, too weak from loss of blood to hold his position any longer. Pizarro sprang forward to take his place and, despite the disadvantage of being at least twice the age of his oldest opponent, fought with the speed and courage of a tiger. "Oh yes," he exclaimed, in the first flurry of cut and thrust, "traitors! Have you come to kill me in my own house?"

Two of his adversaries fell to his sword. The others drew back in dismay.

"Well, come on," he taunted them. "You think I can't deal with you all?" He lunged at them again, and the conspirators fell back a few more paces to avoid the fury of his assault.

"Why are we taking so long?" yelled Rada. Eager to end matters quickly, he grabbed hold of one of his companions, and pushed him forward, straight onto Pizarro's sword. In that instant, before the weapon could be withdrawn from the unfortunate man, Rada darted in, and stabbed Pizarro in the throat. As he reeled from the blow, and sank to his knees, Rada and several others plunged their swords into his body.

"Jesu!" cried Pizarro, with his dying breath. He lay still for a moment, then with his finger traced a cross on the bloody floor, and bent his head down to kiss it. Another stroke put an end to him.

The conspirators were not in control of Lima. Their first step was to seek out and apprehend Pizarro's secretary, Picado, who, they interrogated as to where his master had hidden his treasure. Picado would not, or could not, tell them, even though they made him suffer the most excruciating tortures. Unable to get the information they wanted,

they publicly beheaded him in the great square of Lima. Very soon afterwards, Valverde, Bishop of Cuzco, with the judge, Velasquez, and some other followers of Pizarro, were allowed to embark from the port of Lima.

To this day, it is generally believed that Pizarro expended his vast fortune on building his capital of Lima. But how can that be true? His building costs would have been almost negligible. Most of the materials, such as stone and timber were in abundance, and freely available. There were also plenty of Indian slaves to do all the work.

Pizarro was neither mean nor generous, but he was avaricious, and it is very unlikely that his vast fortune was given away in gifts to his friends, or that it was consumed in building his city of Lima.

During the years before his death, Pizarro could have been sending large amounts of gold north, to the hidden safety of the San Andreas Mountains. Initially, these consignments of gold going north would not have aroused undue suspicions, as he was long in the habit of dispatching large amounts of gold to his creditors in Panama. Later on, of course, he would have had to exercise greater discretion. In which case, the gold would have been sent north in secret, probably disguised as pig iron ingots, each ingot having been treated with the bituminous substance the Incas used for surfacing their royal roads, and loaded aboard empty vessels as ballast. In the further interests of secrecy, the conveying of these consignments of gold would have had to be entrusted to people who could keep their mouths shut. It is therefore likely that these same people would have been partners in the scheme, having deposited

their own shares of gold with Pizarro's cache.

It must be explained why Pizarro, and some of his followers, would have sent their gold north to be hidden under the San Andreas Mountain. The answer to this question is quite obvious, when considering the enormous amount of gold they had to protect, they needed a safe place to hide it. Keeping the gold in their personal possession would have attracted every cut-throat in the New World. It has already



been shown how easily the conspirators gained entrance to Pizarro's palace to murder him. Keeping the gold in Lima would have been a very risky proposition, necessitating a permanent twenty-four-hour guard, with no absolute guarantee that it would remain safe. In any case, the posting of such a guard would not have been practical, considering the uncertain state of the country, with soldiers continually having to be pulled away to deal with rebellions and civil wars.

There was a political side to all of this. Pizarro would never have allowed the Crown to treat him in the same manner as it treated Cortes. But if, at some future date, the Crown had decided to remove him, his entire fortune would have been in jeopardy. We have the fate of his brother, Herando, to confirm the likelihood of that happening. Upon returning to Spain, shortly before the assassination of Pizarro, he was arrested on trumped-up charges, and incarcerated for 20 years in the strong fortress of Medina del Campo. Could it be that he was held there without sentence because he would not reveal the secret hiding place of Pizarro's treasure? Doc Noss was not a mining engineer, and he bitterly regretted the fact a little later on, after all his efforts to blast a way into the mountain had proved useless. First he had tried clearing away the entrance hole with a charge of dynamite, but the explosion had shaken the mountain so badly that the unstable roof of the passageway collapsed. Next he had tried blasting into the side of the mountain, but all that had done was to bring countless tons of rocks crashing down. It was now going to be a very tricky job getting back into the treasure rooms again. He realised he would not be able to do that on his own. What he needed was the help of a qualified mining engineer. That would cost a deal of money he did not have readily available to him. For that reason, he made arrangements to sell some of the gold he had earlier taken out of the mountain. It has previously been mentioned that the private ownership of gold was illegal in the USA.

So what Doc Noss was intending to do, when he visited the house of a prospective buyer on that fateful night back in 1949, was to take part in a crooked transaction. Doc Noss and the other man were in the kitchen, seated at a table facing each other. They were alone for a few minutes and then a door opened and the wife of the man came in. She did not look at them, nor did she speak, but went straight to the back of the kitchen where she pretended to be busy. Doc Noss was uncomfortably aware that she was quietly listening in on the discussion. He began questioning the man, at first tentatively, but, once he suspected there might be something wrong, he came straight to the point.

"Do you have the money?" he asked.

"Yeah," answered the man, as though that was a non-essential detail.

"I've got it."

"Where?" said Doc Noss.

"Can I see it?"

"In the minute," replied the man. "Let's have a drink first."

"His wife crossed the floor with a bottle of whiskey and two glasses, put them on the table in front of the two men, and returned to the back of the kitchen.

Doc Noss felt an uneasy qualm. As he did not know the man, he had felt he could not trust him, even before he had come to the meeting.

The man took the bottle and poured whiskey into the glasses. "I've had some spare time on my hands just lately," he said, "and I've been making a few discreet inquiries about you."

Doc Noss frowned.

"What did you want to know?"

"Well," drawled the man, "I found out that you're a bit of a prospector."

"So, what's new?"

"Aw, just one or two things that don't seem to add up."

"Such as?"

"Well, I asked myself, why would a prospector want to sell me gold?"

"What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing," said he, shaking his head.

"Nothing, except, why not sell it in the usual way?"

"Look, do you want to buy the gold or not?"

"Yeah, but I'd have to see it first."

"And I'd have to see your cash," countered Doc Noss. He was very angry and showed it.

"In any case, I don't think I'll stick around any longer."

He rose to his feet.

The man spoke quietly. "Why, where are you going?"

"Home," replied Doc Noss.

"You can't go home yet, you haven't finished your drink."

Doc Noss gave him a scornful look. "I don't drink."

With that he crossed the floor of the kitchen in a few rapid strides, opened the door, and went out to the driveway where his utility truck was parked.

Suddenly, the man's wife started to shriek that Doc Noss was going to fetch a gun. Coming out of the house in a hurry, the man stood on the porch, raised his arm, and pointed a pistol at Doc Noss.

"Stop," he shouted, "or I'll shoot!"

Doc Noss ignored the warning, and kept going. Just as he reached his truck, there was a sharp report from the pistol, and a bullet hit him in the back. He threw up his arms and clutched the empty air in a spasm of agony, then fell to the ground dead.

We now come to the most important part of the story, which deals with those who have laid claims to the treasure of the San Andreas Mountains. These claims, for what they are worth, have been lodged by private persons, such as the Doc Noss family, and some ex-servicemen, who were stationed at the White Sands Missile Base when they made their discovery of the treasure. Claims have also been lodged by Indian agencies representing the Apaches, whose ancestors were supposed to have hidden the gold under the mountain. All of these claims, which are now in the process of coming before the US court, must, inevitably, stand the test of the highest legal, as well as moral, standards of justice. This fact ought to encourage the Peruvian people, who have the strongest possible claim, to bring a lawsuit for the return of the treasure. Their claim, of course, would be that of victims of unprovoked aggression seeking the return of property stolen from their country.

